Andrzej Stawar

WRITINGS ON FASCISM

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FOREWORD

Andrzej Stawar (May 1, 1900–August 5, 1961) remains one of the most original, yet least known, Polish Marxists.

He was born into a working-class family in Warsaw on May 1, 1900, as Edward Janus. During World War I and the German occupation, he was forced to interrupt his education and become an autodidact.

In 1923, he joined the illegal Communist Workers' Party of Poland (in 1925, the party changed its name to the Communist Party of Poland). He was a prolific journalist, publishing under the pseudonym Andrzej Stawar in the legal cultural press of the Communist Party of Poland: in *Nowa Kultura (New Culture)* (1923-24), *Dźwignia (The Lever)* (1927-28), and *Miesięcznik Literacki (Literary Monthly)* (1929-31). He also published in the apolitical *Wiadomości Literackie (Literary News)* (1925) and *Skamander* (1926).

In 1931, along with other members of the editorial staff of *Miesięcznik Literacki (Literary Monthly)*, he was arrested and sentenced to two months in prison. In 1934, together with Roman Jabłonowski, an activist of the Communist Party of Poland (KPP), he founded the magazine *Pod Prąd (Against the Current)*, which was published until 1936.

It was in *Pod Prąd* and in *Nurt (The Current)*, published in 1937 (only one issue appeared), that Stawar published his most important political and theoretical texts. Among other things, he conducted a theoretical analysis of fascism and polemics with Trotskyism. It should be noted, however, that he essentially agreed with Trotsky's characterization of the Soviet bureaucracy. It was Stawar's anti-Stalinism that condemned him to ostracism from his party comrades and forced him to leave the Communist Party of Poland. He never joined another party again.

After *Nurt* was shut down, Stawar occasionally wrote for *Wiadomości Literackie* and the social democratic *Dziennik Ludowy (The People's Daily)*. In 1939, after the outbreak of World War II, he was mobilized and took part in the September Campaign. After the fall of Poland, he made his way to Hungary, where he was active in the Committee for the Care of Polish Refugees. In 1945, he returned to Poland.

After the war, he briefly worked at the Ministry of Culture and Art and returned to literary criticism. In 1949, he refused to undergo self-criticism and condemn his pre-war views, for which he was banned from publishing. From 1949 to 1955, he made a living solely from translator work.

During the Thaw, he was associated with the reformist intelligentsia, writing for *Dialog* (1956-58) and *Nowa Kultura* (1958-1960), among others. In 1960, seriously ill, he left for France for treatment. There, he contacted the émigré magazine *Kultura* with a request to publish his pre-war writings, which he had been unable to publish in his homeland. Stawar died in Saint-Germain-en-Laye on August 5, 1961. After cremation, his ashes were transported to Warsaw and buried during a state funeral. In September 1961, his *"Pisma ostatnie" ("Final Writings")* were published in the *Biblioteka "Kultury"* series.

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The two essays presented here showcase Stawar's analysis of fascism. In *"On Bonapartism and Fascism,"* the author points out the differences between fascist and Bonapartist regimes (including the unmentioned by name Polish Sanacja regime). Among Stawar's original insights, one should mention what is probably the first formulation of the colonial boomerang theory, i.e., the notion of fascism as a transplantation of colonial methods and regimes to the metropolis.

The essay *"On Totalitarianism"* analyzes parallels between fascism and Stalinism, while acknowledging their distinct class foundations. While analyzing their internal dynamics, Stawar points to possible ways out of "totalitarian absolutism" toward socialist democracy.

Both essays are being translated into English for the first time, which will hopefully broaden awareness and reception of this interesting thinker.

TRANSLATOR’S NOTE

Translations are based on reprints in: Andrzej Stawar *“Pisma ostatnie”*, Instytut Literacki, Paris 1961.

The author's footnotes are labeled with Arabic numerals.

Footnotes labeled with Roman numerals and text in square brackets were added by the translator.

ON BONAPARTISM AND FASCISM

Original title:
“O bonapartyzmie i faszyzmie”

Originally published:
Against the Current (Pod Prąd), vol. I, 1934.

Translation based on:
Andrzej Stawar “Pisma ostatnie”,
Instytut Literacki, Paris 1961, pp. 15-33.

Distinctions

In this essay, I consider the topic from a sociological-historical rather than a political point of view, and what follows can by no means claim to exhaust the question completely. The events of recent years have significantly updated the problems associated with the rise of reactionary regimes of the dictatorial type and provided a wealth of comparative material. What we have witnessed in Germany in particular, the process of racist fascism taking over Europe's largest industrial country, with a working population of several million, has shone a new light on widely held stereotypes and necessitates a more nuanced approach to problems. It must also be acknowledged that the widespread practice by a significant segment of Marxists of lumping all manifestations of reaction into one bag, labeled fascism, creates enormous conceptual confusion.

Trotsky categorically posed the distinction between Bonapartism and fascism in his pamphlet "What Next," in connection with his assessment of pre-Hitler governments in Germany. I will not delve into the author's construction in detail here, but one point is particularly poorly justified. The author presents the "preservation of the equilibrium between the two irreconcilable camps" as the fundamental characteristic that allows the German "presidential cabinets" of the transitional period to be described as Bonapartist. According to the author, these balancing acts, maneuvering, and "transitory" qualities justify the designation of a given regime as "Bonapartist." He generalizes his thesis, claiming: "The analogy with Bonapartism, quite concrete, precisely defined, not only clarified anew the role of the last Giolitti cabinet maneuvering between the Fascists and the Socialists, but also throws a burning light on the present transitional regime in Austria. Now one can already openly speak of the profound, logical necessity of the period of «Bonapartist» transition between parliamentarism and Fascism." ("The 4th of August"[I]).

This distinction is noteworthy because it breaks with the routine practice of labeling every reactionary regime employing arbitrary and dictatorial means as fascism. But in presenting acrobatics and maneuvering between opposing camps as a fundamental feature of Bonapartism, the author is gravely mistaken. Incidentally, this view is linked to the author's theory of the state, expounded in his historical and journalistic works on the Russian Revolution – a whole topic in itself. It is worth recalling here the classic characterization of the Bonapartist dictatorship in France, in the form of the First and Second Empires, developed in "The 18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon."

I L. D. Trotsky "On «The Fourth of August». The Limits of Historical Analogy. A Reply to Some Objections" (July 1933); available online at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1933/06/4august.htm

Describing the social face of the Bonapartist reaction after 1848, emphasizing the course of class conflicts between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and the formation of the dictatorship's political and administrative mechanism, Marx does not limit himself to describing maneuvering but presents the emergence of a class bloc of property-owners as the new basis of government. Louis Napoleon acted against official bourgeois politicians.

The existence of a lasting and solid social base in the form of the aforementioned bloc enabled Louis Napoleon's government to survive the first fluctuations of the political situation and to remain in power for a longer period than even the most astute of his opponents had expected.

In the examples discussed by Trotsky (Giolitti, Schleicher[II], and others), such a firmer foundation is lacking. The “maneuvering” took place within the parliamentary sphere, and despite all this, these systems belong to different varieties of suspended parliamentarism (Article 48 in Germany[III]). These are therefore phenomena of unequal significance, and this is most evident when considering the governments of the two “authentic” Bonapartes. If in both Bonapartes we see leaders of a bloc of the propertied classes, organized, admittedly, from above, with the forced removal of former bourgeois politicians from the scene, the fact is that Giolitti and Schleicher, cited by Trotsky, were unable to fulfill this task and therefore fell, giving way to the rule of the fascist party. The fact that they may have harbored illusions of arbitration in relation to the warring camps does not change the essence of the matter. Their maneuvering was powerless, and the fact that they possessed a material base (army, bureaucracy) also makes no difference, as these governments were unable to mobilize these resources. If Napoleon I and III had been as Bonapartist as Giolitti and Schleicher, there would have been no “Bonapartism” at all. One cannot mistake the subjective desire to consolidate bourgeois society by embracing all contradictions and ruling arbitrarily for the actual achievement of this consolidation. On the other hand, one cannot treat all Bonapartist-type governments a priori as transitional to fascism – and this seems to be precisely what Trotsky's arguments imply.

Of course, when considering Bonapartism and fascism in their historical concreteness, we must remember that social phenomena cannot be reduced to a “pure” form, because we always have a

II Giovanni Giolitti (1842-1928) was an Italian liberal politician and five times prime minister of Italy between 1892 and 1921. Thanks to parliamentary maneuvering and political corruption he was able to form grand coalitions.
Kurt von Schleicher (1882-1934) was a German conservative politician and last pre-Nazi chancellor from December 1932 to January 1933. He (unsuccessfully) tried to form a grand coalition spanning from Social Democrats to “moderate” Nazis.

III Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution allowed the President to assume emergency powers to protect “public security and order”, without the prior consent of the Reichstag.

whole range of intermediate forms in which the differences seem to blur. Therefore, we must carefully distinguish primary, fundamental features from secondary ones, without seeking illusory syntheses. The concept of fascism has become a universal label for anything that smacks of social reaction. In the well-known theory conceived by the orthodox of the new cult[IV], it has expanded to encompass all political groups and ideologies rooted in the bourgeois system, not only nationalists but also socialists, reformists, and populists[V]. This seems a very convenient terminology; the essence of each trend is defined with extreme ease and simplicity: social democrats are designated the left wing of fascism under the label of social-fascists, populists [*ludowcy*] become populist-fascists [*ludofaszyści*], and so on. In this way, terminological fascisation precedes the actual fascisation of bourgeois society. Is it necessary to argue that with such a broad treatment, the specificity of the phenomenon called fascism is blurred, the term itself becomes a broad and empty abstraction, losing its proper meaning? Explaining these things is made difficult by the fact that the term already carries emotional meaning for the broad masses. People who argue that drawing distinctions here is pointless employ a very practical argument: does it matter to a worker who strikes him with a truncheon? This simplified manner of reasoning occurs when, in a discussion about the political form of a given country, the interlocutor, with a triumphant expression, cites, for example, the abuse of a worker in custody as evidence and says, “And to say that there's no fascism.” This emotional significance is perhaps the most difficult to overcome when discussing these matters. Theoretical sloppiness is combined with a naive belief in the lethal power of terminology. The vulgar mixing of external signs and characteristics, the reliance on superficial generalizations, of course, creates inevitable holes in reasoning, which are then patched up with some synthetic paste of abstract Marxist theorems, which the school in question uses for all cases.

If this approach, on a purely formal basis, has dealt with the entirety of bourgeois movements and parties from right to left, then the individual forms of dictatorial regimes pose no problem. But those who lump the Horthy regime, Alexander of Yugoslavia, and the late Primo de Rivera[VI]

IV I.e. the theory of “social-fascism” promoted by the Stalinist Comintern.

V The Polish Populist movement [*ruch ludowy*] was formed during the late 19th century and represented peasant interests. During the interwar period the Populists were split between various parties falling on the political spectrum from left to center-right. In 1931 they merged into the Populist Party (*Stronnictwo Ludowe, SL*) which demanded land reform without compensation and nationalization of main branches of the economy.

VI Miklós Horthy (1868-1957) was a counterrevolutionary military leader and regent of the Kingdom of Hungary from 1920 to 1944. His reactionary dictatorship was an Axis power during WWII. After the tide of the war shifted, he declared an armistice with the Allies and was overthrown in a German-supported coup. After the war he emigrated to Portugal.
Alexander I of Yugoslavia (1888-1934) was King of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes from 1921 to 1929 and King of Yugoslavia from 1929 to 1934. In 1929 he prorogued parliament and abolished the constitution, instituting personal dictatorship. In 1931 he decreed a new constitution, which abolished the secret ballot and gave the King vast

together with the regimes of Mussolini and Hitler suffer from an incurable theoretical blindness. It is necessary to examine more carefully the essence of the matter, the internal components of these reactionary regimes.[1]

If one takes as a starting point characteristics such as the dictatorship of an individual and the monopoly of power in the hands of a specific clique to the exclusion of all other bourgeois groups, one must also distinguish aspects such as the technique of exercising power, personnel issues, and the social base of the movement. Despite all the external similarities, there are differences in these points sufficiently marked to lean on them.

Let us consider the first point: a key feature of both regimes is their strong exclusivity with regard to socially close political groups, which are either absorbed or violently eliminated. This is expressed in a monopoly on the exercise of power and a monopoly on political activity. But here a distinction must be made: the monopoly of power of a certain group or party is one thing, and political monopoly is another. The former consists in the fact that the leading state officials are taken from a given group and its supporters, and only from among them, that the selection of cooperating bodies is subject to strict control, and that a given political group is the only one to represent the state internally and externally. A political monopoly exists when, apart from a given clique or party in power, any political activity is impossible, and the most basic forms of organization of people of any political views, even those that are socially similar, are prevented. This is the main difference between the struggle against parliamentarianism, parties, and formal democracy in general, as waged by Bonapartist and fascist regimes.

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executive powers. In 1934 he was assassinated during a state visit in France by Bulgarian and Croatian nationalists. Miguel Primo de Rivera (1870-1930) was a Spanish military officer who in 1923 staged a military coup and became a dictator. In 1930 his regime disintegrated after he was unable to mitigate the economic and social effects of the Great Depression, and he lost the confidence of the army and country’s ruling classes. Primo de Rivera died merely two months after abdicating and going into exile. His son, José Antonio (1903-1936), was the founder and leader of the fascist Falange.

1 One note: when it comes to the use of the term Bonapartism, it may seem that the term is being applied too broadly, and again to formations that differ from one another. But as we know, completely pure political-systemic types are not encountered in history – the particular features of particular systems tend to resemble each other and sometimes merge. In this case, we are talking about quite close relatives. As is well known, Marx described Bismarck's rule as akin to Bonapartist rule. It did not follow that the Hohenzollern monarchy and the Third Empire should be taken as an analogous; the point was the affinity of the militaristic-bureaucratic nature of power, accompanied by certain demagogic gestures towards the masses (Bonaparte's “People's Monarchy,” Bismarck's attempts at political and social demagogy). Undoubtedly, the point was quite specific: to contrast Bismarck's actions with purely legitimistic forms of reaction, such as the monarchist reaction of the 19th century. This distinction remains relevant today, despite the absence of authorities “by God's grace.” The differences that interest us cannot be reduced to demagogy alone; they lie in the overall operation of the regime.

Bonapartist regimes have been unable to move beyond monopoly of power. We see this both in the Bonapartism of the 19th century and that of today. They have achieved far-reaching centralization of power in their hands, stripped people from other factions of that power, subjected their activities to strict control, and made it possible to destroy them through repression. But they were unable to completely remove them from the political scene. Political life is kept in check by the police, its manifestations are more or less subdued and weakened, the opposition is controlled or suppressed by the authorities, but it still exists and functions. Legal “society,” its elements, exists alongside the state, i.e., alongside the group endowed with a monopoly of power, an administrative monopoly. The latter, despite all its efforts, cannot change this state of affairs, as it lacks the means to do so. Fascism differs from Bonapartism primarily in that it has such means, in that it removes the opposition between the state, the administration, and “society” from the surface of legality, and that it realizes the ideal of complete, unlimited leadership.

The strength that enables the fascist regime to exercise complete political monopoly comes from its mass political base. This is where the most important differences between the two regimes lie.

The existence of a mass cadre, bound together by a tight organization, gives fascism the opportunity for an incomparably deeper penetration into social life. In a classic Bonapartist regime, the center of gravity of power rests with the state administration – citizens are free to wag their toes, encouraged to remain nonpartisan and obedient to state authority. In a fascist dictatorship, we have a different principle. Here, the state administration becomes an agency of the party. Through the fibers of party agencies, it penetrates society to the furthest, most insignificant centers. The difference lies not in the question of power. People who think along the lines of the old reactionary regimes tend to turn their attention to the prohibitory aspect of the regime, but it is neither essential nor new. What is new is what could be called universal political conscription, by analogy with universal military conscription. Citizens are drawn into political service en masse by placing them under strict command, without being consulted on these matters, just as those drafted into military service. It is believed that every German, every Italian, etc., by the very fact of being born an Italian or a German, should profess the political faith of the rulers, just as a recruit should burn with the desire for a glorious death in the field. Disobedient individuals are subject to repression. The existence of a vast number of voluntary agents of power and their penetration into the smallest social cells provides a far greater possibility of control and preventive repression than in any form of state to date. Massive terror and the destruction of popular resistance organizations allow the fascist regime

to consider itself immune from the minor daily disruptions that liberal governments are subject to. In this way, the propertied classes receive into their hands the most comprehensive apparatus of power that has existed since the Middle Ages.[2]

In a Bonapartist-type coup, these elements are present to a lesser degree. It is more “aristocratic” in nature. Because of this, the coup mechanism differs, being much less branched than in a fascist coup. A Bonapartist coup, with its typical military putsch in the capital, is essentially an expanded palace revolution – it is confined within the framework of the government, its instrument being the army, or rather the officer corps. Accordingly, it secures itself with appropriate shifts in the state's administrative hierarchy. Cooperating “social” elements are usually relegated to the background. One could list all such coups, from Napoleon Bonaparte to Colonel Plechavičius[VII], and in each one we will find analogous features.

We see a much more complex picture in the classic fascist coups in Italy and Germany. Here, the tool of the coup is a political party, operating on a mass scale and mobilizing largely the lower social echelons. To explain these matters, it would be necessary to discuss the evolution of political tactics in relation to class struggle in bourgeois society, with the characteristic nullification of these tactics and the spread of mass organizations.

Driving forces

A deeper feature, often emphasized, is that fascism came into action after the decisive battle had been fought, after the main revolutionary forces had been defeated. This is very clear in Italy. In 1919, fascism attempted to adapt to the rising revolutionary wave. At a time when workers were occupying factories, the future dictator's guard did not rush to defend the factory owners – on the contrary, it was called upon to participate in the movement. When the movement collapsed, or rather became paralyzed, it was this internal collapse of the workers' movement that gave a strong

2 People who tend to confuse the monopoly of power alone with a political monopoly introduced to such an extent, fail to grasp the most elementary issues. (The Italian and German accounts speak to the significance of such mass, constant drafting of the population to political services for the ruling party.) Of course, this does not – as the fascists would like to argue – contribute to the disappearance of class struggle and social antagonisms, but it does create obstacles to their reveal.

VII Povilas Plechavičius (1890-1973) was a Lithuanian military officer. During the Russian Civil War he fought against the Bolsheviks. In 1926 he lead a military coup that gave power to the Lithuanian National Union (a previously marginal far-right party). After 1940 Soviet invasion he emigrated to Germany. In 1944 he formed a collaborationist militia (Lithuanian Territorial Defense Force). After WWII he emigrated to the West, where he worked for MI6 and CIA.

impetus and direction to the fascist ranks. This mainly concerned those elements of the petty bourgeoisie who were ready to go along with the workers' revolution, but who were more interested in the revolution itself than in the program under which it was to be carried out.

These elements mainly come into play during the crushing of remaining scattered and internally confused centers of resistance in the working class. Only then does Mussolini's specific ideology and tactics take shape, not those of the 1919 Mussolini, but those of Mussolini who came to power in 1922.

This marks the beginning of a period of tactical maneuvering on two fronts, which constitutes the main part of the so-called “national revolution.” Providing the landowners and factory owners with squads to crush the revolutionary movement in their localities, it simultaneously puts forward a program of revolution with a very broad range of demands, calculated to win over the most diverse elements, sometimes strongly agitated but not fully led by the revolutionary party. This work on the raw material and forces of a derailed revolution is precisely what constitutes its essential and novel feature. One could use the comparison that fascism taps into the conduits that supply the revolution with energy and uses the stolen energy to power its own engines. By eliminating the revolutionary process to its own advantage, it attempts to give the revolution an epilogue that is “organic” according to its own understanding.

This is what distinguishes fascism from a reaction that broke the revolution with external forces, as was the case in Hungary. Here, the counterrevolution was carried out by representatives of the former rulers (with the military assistance of the Coalition) and could be given a strictly legitimist character. The big landowners returned to power as before, without the decisive help of the petty bourgeoisie, and after their victory they were able to freely dismiss it.

The example cited above illustrates the complexity of the issue (which, incidentally, largely explains the desire to find blanket formulas for all cases). In this study, I will limit myself to highlighting the differences, postponing a more detailed analysis to the consideration of individual regimes of this type. However, there is no doubt that the starting point here should be the specific social conditions of a given country and the degree to which it has been transformed by the bourgeois revolution, its level of economic development, and the penetration of large-scale industry. Here, of course, the unique conditions of each individual country come to the fore.

This parasitizing of a failed revolution, diverting it onto a different track, is the characteristic feature that distinguishes fascism from every other form of counterrevolution. This is made possible precisely by the mass nature of the organizing of the petty bourgeoisie, including all its most dissatisfied elements, who yearn for change at all costs.

Bourgeois observers, more or less sympathetic, emphasize the “organic” nature of the process of fascism's rise to power. Mr. Drobnik[VIII], an Endek commentator on the Hitlerite Gospel, describes the development of Hitlerism as the old state's credit collapsed among the propertied classes: “In this way, as the party grew, a new state emerged slowly from the bottom up within the existing state. Over time, the party organization swelled to the point that it began to absorb all the nation's most vital juices, while the power and authority of the official state organization faded ... The official state grew thinner, like an organism within which a much more vital organism grows and drains its juices. When this process reached a certain stage of development, the old organization inevitably collapsed, and a new organization emerged from beneath its ruins.”

Of course, Mr. Drobnik exaggerates somewhat when he speaks of the “collapse” of the old state organization. What we have here is a fusion with the old state organization, rather than its breakdown and the emergence of a new one. In Italy, this process took place in a more condensed form; in Germany, it was more protracted in terms of preparation (while the subsequent development of the political monopoly was much more rapid). One of the most characteristic representatives of German pseudo-liberalism of the latest epoch, Bernhard[IX], in his book on Mussolinism, emphasizes as a characteristic tactic the “doubling” of state authorities, consisting in the creation, alongside local state administrative bodies in the police, railways, etc., of a corresponding Fascist party body, enjoying greater trust of the “nation,” i.e., the property owners, and incorporating itself into the permanent remit of state authority. How did this happen? Undeniably, in 1919-20, during the peak of the revolutionary wave, there were elements of dual power. The government, uncertain of its military power, mostly retreated from the streets; the workers' committees were the de facto co-ruling power. When they failed to implement their de

VIII Jerzy Drobnik (1894-1974) was a Polish journalist representing the National Democracy movement (*Narodowa Demokracja, endecja* – a Polish reactionary ethnonationalist movement). In 1931 he was was one the founders of Union of Young Nationalists (*Związek Młodych Narodowców*) – organization of Endeks sympathizing with Sanacja, the ruling semi-military dictatorship (most National Democrats were in opposition).

IX Georg Bernhard (1875-1944) was a German liberal journalist and politician. He was editor-in-chief of *Vossische Zeitung* from 1914 to 1930. From 1928 to 1930 he served as parliamentarian for the German Democratic Party. In 1933 he emigrated to France, and in 1940 to the United States.

facto co-power and retreated in fear, the veterans' organization stepped in and gripped it. This harmonizes with the overall pattern of the semi-parasitic counterrevolution growing out of the failed revolution. Thus, even before assuming power in Rome, fascist agencies captured not only individual towns but entire provinces.

This is possible, of course, with the clear participation of the leading elements of the old administration. The revolution here, too, achieved its goal only partially – it discredited the leading top of the bourgeois state apparatus, contrasting it with the bottom, but did not engage its opponents in open struggle. Under these conditions, these top brass of the state apparatus, linked to the property owners, renounce their “independence” and, with heavy hearts, submit to the new force of order and discipline, which has passed the test of its capacity to govern through its terror against the masses. In these circumstances, the slogan of a “preventive” coup begins to unite almost all elements of the old regime. But without the cooperation of the old apparatus with the “subversives”, a preventive coup could not have succeeded.

The decisive moment of the “coup” is the unification of both apparatuses for unified action. Fascist ideologists attempt to portray the injection of new forces into the old organism of the police state as the entry of new social content through a “national revolution.” It is more difficult for them to say anything specific about this content.

Of course, one doesn't have to assume that this goes smoothly. The old regime's leadership reluctantly resigns itself before the new rulers. While in classic Bonapartism we see the shifts taking place primarily within government institutions, here the focus is primarily on party militants taking control of the streets. For a period, distrust of the government's repressive forces prevails, as seen in the case of Mussolini and his German disciple.

In Germany, as mentioned above, the process was much more protracted in its initial phase, but its fundamental characteristics were the same. What was referred to in Germany as a period of “dry fascistization” with the intensive cooperation of the S[ocial]D[emocracy] (on which the circumstantial evidential material for the absurd theory of social-fascism was based) was rather a period of struggle against the remnants of dual power. Noskes, Grzesinskis, and Severings[X] were

X Social Democrats who took part in suppressing the revolutionary workers’ movement.
Gustav Noske (1868-1946) was the German defense minister from 1919 to 1920. He was principle person responsible for organizing the White Terror by arming the *Freikorps*. He suppressed the Spartacist uprising of 1919.

terrified of being accused of what the bourgeois press called “Kerenskyism,” and while remaining in power, they hastened to show their proverbial strong hand towards the workers' left. History mocked the prudence of these venerable activists, forcing them to play the real role of Kerenskyism in relation to the coup from the right.

Intermediate elements and regression

When it comes to the new, specific elements of the fascist regime that distinguish it from parliamentary democracy, it is well known that for Marxists of the well-known school, the issue of changes brought about by the new state of affairs boils down to a formal matter – they deal with everything using a universal formula: a change in the forms of bourgeois dictatorship. For them, all these “democratic freedoms” associated with parliamentary democracy are nothing more than a cunning bourgeois deception. The petty-bourgeois ideologues of this democracy are merely playing their assigned role; they are the left wing of fascism. Between these formally opposing factions, there is only a division of labor under the aegis of capital. One side wields the club, the other side wields platitudes.

It's hard to imagine anything more simplistic, vulgar, and anti-Marxist than posing the question in such a way. Undoubtedly, at its core, there was a certain reaction to the prewar trend, when the “minimal program” was, in reality, the only achievable goal in a given historical period, obscuring and relegating the “ultimate” goal to the mists of time. The one-sided view of “deception” that emerged as a reaction was, in turn, caricatured in the theory of the division of roles. But it's important to remember that these democratic freedoms were achieved primarily through the hard work of entire generations of the proletariat. It's worth citing the opinion of a man who provided a devastating analysis of democratic illusions and understood these matters a hundred times better than today's scholastics. The author of “The State and Revolution” can hardly be accused of

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From 1920 he was governor of Hanover. Noske was dismissed by the Nazis in 1933 and withdrew from politics.
Albert Grzesinski (1879-1948) became chief of the Prussian Police in 1922. From 1925 to 1926 he was chief of the Berlin Police. In 1926 he became the Prussian interior minister. In this capacity in he banned the *Rot Front* in 1929. He was responsible for the 1929 May Day massacre in Berlin (*Blutmai*). He resigned in 1930 and again became chief of the Berlin Police. In 1931 at a Berlin rally of paramilitary organization *Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold*, he declared that “the Communists are a greater danger” than Nazis. In 1932 he was dismissed from his position after the dissolution of the Prussian government. He emigrated in 1933.
Carl Severing (1875-1952) was the Reich interior minister from 1928 to 1930 and three-time Prussian interior minister (1920-1921, 1921-1926, 1930-1932). After 1933 he withdrew from political life. After WWII he became member of the West German SPD.

spreading illusions and deception – he places the mechanics of achieving democratic freedoms on a completely concrete basis. Take, for example, this characterization of the Octobrist Party of 1911.[XI]

"Essentially there is nothing in the present policy of the Octobrists to distinguish them from the Rights, except that the Octobrist Party serves not only the landlords, but also the big capitalists, the conservative merchants, and the bourgeoisie, which was so terrified by the awakening of the workers, and then also of the peasants, to independent political life, that it made a *volte-face* towards defence of the old order. There are capitalists in Russia – quite a few, indeed – who treat the workers not a bit better than the landlords treated the serfs of old; they look on workers and clerks as their menials, as servants... There is capitalism and capitalism. There is Black-Hundred-Octobrist capitalism and *Narodnik* («realistic, democratic», full of «activity») capitalism. The International proletariat is pressing capitalism in two ways: by converting Octobrist capitalism into democratic capitalism and, because it drives Octobrist capitalism away *from itself*, by *transplanting* this capitalism to the savages... There is practically no Octobrist capitalism left in Western Europe; practically all capitalism is democratic. Octobrist capitalism has gone from Britain and France to Russia and Asia. The Russian revolution and the revolution in Asia are the struggle for ousting Octobrist capitalism and replacing it by democratic capitalism." (Volume XV of Lenin's Works, "Letter to M. Gorky". Written in 1911.)[XII]

Of course, this does not mean that Lenin reduced the tasks of the workers to this shift. But it shows how absurd it is to reduce these things to a question of "deception," of replacing democratic deception with naked violence. On the contrary, all these partial reforms were a by-product of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat. By destroying these reforms, by destroying these concessions, fascism is waging a real struggle against the revolution in this area; it understands perfectly well what these compromises mean. A regressive movement is taking place here:

XI Union of October 17 (commonly the Octobrists) was a conservative Russian party founded during the First Russian Revolution. Its name referenced Tsar's Manifesto issued on 17 October 1905 in which he promised reforms. The party supported transition into a constitutional monarchy and implementation of land reform in a way that protected the interest of great landowners and rich peasants (*kulaks*). It opposed national liberation movements in the Russian Empire and the workers' movement. It's membership came mostly from big industrialists and landowners. After February Revolution, Octobrists joined the Provisional Government and gradually merged with the liberal Constitutional Democrats (the Cadets). After the October Revolution many Octobrists joined the counterrevolution.

XII Partially incorrect attribution by Stawar. The beginning of the quote (before the sentence "There is capitalism and capitalism") comes from Lenin's article "Political Parties in Russia" (May 10, 1912; available online at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1912/may/10.htm). The rest of the quote does come from Lenin's letter to Maxim Gorky from January 3, 1911 (available online at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1911/jan/03mg.htm), though it must be noted that Stawar doesn't consistently signal omissions with ellipses.

“Octobrist” capital is beginning to re-enter Western Europe. Such is the concrete content of the slogans calling for a return to the Middle Ages: the introduction of a corporative system and the suppression of attempts at class resistance in the field of relations between capitalists and workers. Underlying all this is the desire to return to patriarchal-serf relations: to transform workers and employees into servants of entrepreneurs, thereby removing the constraints on exploitation imposed by class struggle. That this is not 100% successful is another matter; the resistance is too strong, the working masses have gone too far in their development to be able to permanently endure attempts to impose a medieval yoke. But that is the tendency.[3]

One of Poland's conservative magazines recently quoted a remark by Oswald Spengler, a prominent reactionary ideologue, as a characteristic expression of the changes in social consciousness caused by the rise of Hitlerism to power.

“The century of worker worship – 1840-1940 – is irrevocably coming to an end. Workers are being reintegrated into the nation, no longer as its beloved children, but as the lowest class of the urban population.”

This is a hateful exaggeration. The worker was never such a “beloved child,” and the “century of worker worship” was only a figment of the inflamed brain of a junkers ideologue. There was something else, however. There is no doubt that since 1848, when the illusions associated with the liberal slogans of the bourgeois revolution collapsed, when it turned out that out of fear of the proletariat it got stuck in a quagmire of compromises with the most reactionary elements of the old society, all the hopes of the progressive intelligentsia, the radical petty bourgeoisie, the progressive elements had to turn to the proletariat and its movement. Even those elements that distanced themselves from Marxism but wanted to fight the wildest forms of class violence and the rule of old superstitions turned to the labor movement as the only force capable of ensuring real social progress. It is in this spirit that one must take the hateful exaggeration of Spenglerian slogan about the worship of the worker. Indirectly, even the Hitlerite movement expressed this, when, having set itself the task of rallying the masses around its slogans, it used the terms “workers', socialist” in the name of its party. But it was Hitlerism that dealt the strongest blow to the labor movement, using

3 This is the essence of the Hitlerite decrees on labor. According to them, the capitalist is the “leader” of the workers, who owe him obedience not only within the framework of their employment contract, but also outside of work. This is what characterizes the situation of servants in the old economy, especially in large estates saturated with serfdom traditions.

the radical and populist slogans of its program to create a bloc of the main factions of the petty bourgeoisie with the bourgeoisie and to isolate the working class. People like Spengler sense this and it makes them shout with triumph. We have no reason to doubt that their triumph will be short-lived, but there is also no doubt that today it has real foundations.

Victory consists in the breaking up of what was generally called “the people,” in the 1848 sense, the pitting of the plebeian elements of the city and countryside against the proletariat, the previously more or less recognized leader. This, by the way, is the basis of all the historical victories of the great proprietors. If we take Germany itself, the separation of the peasantry and the urban plebs, the opposition of their interests in 1524, allowed the aristocracy to crush both.

Whatever one says about the durability of today's victories, the fact itself is beyond doubt. And this requires, above all, an explanation of the matter against a broader background than is often done. If, now, in connection with Germany and the victory of National Socialism, accusations and recriminations are raining down on particular people and particular movements – accusations undoubtedly justified and valid – they, for all their justice and pertinence, do not exhaust the matter. One might recall Marx's remark after 1848 that by holding certain leaders solely responsible for the movement's defeat, they are doing them too much honor and attributing a degree of influence on events they never possessed. Overestimating the importance of subjective moments, “overburdening” individual people with responsibility for matters far beyond them, steers the matter towards futile recriminations. There was undoubtedly an impasse, a state of constant confusion in which they remained, but this can be explained by a broader impasse.

The matter cannot be explained by the internal state of affairs within the workers' camp (the predominance of reformism and the parliamentary illusions it fostered, which paralyzed resistance). Even less can it be explained by the bare reference to opponent's strength – because this strength did not arise out of nowhere; the struggle for influence took place over many years. What matters here is the way in which the petty bourgeoisie question was addressed throughout the preceding period.

Not everything here can be attributed to the errors or illusions of particular individuals or factions. Matters that had been entrenched throughout decades, generations of the movement, were at work here. These were issues all the more difficult to overcome because they were associated with a

period of great development. And nothing hinders a proper understanding of the changed situation more than the great successes achieved in the past and the circumstances surrounding them.

For over half a century, practical labor programs were based on the progressive movement of capitalism and the dynamics of the changes it introduced. When we look at any work justifying socialism from the pre-war period, we can see the role played by figures reflecting economic movement and demographic data. If we take the main capitalist countries, with each decade millions of new proletarians are employed in large-scale industry, the relative importance of cities increases, the significance of large-scale industry grows. These points almost automatically determined the forecast for development. If, in the post-war period, under the influence of the world war and revolution, many illusions were shaken and rejected among a very significant section of the working class, the full importance of the issue was not recognized here. The previous belief in the automatic nature of change was expressed in a new form in the conviction that the working class would automatically draw the petty bourgeoisie, at least in its main sections, against capitalism. Alongside the theory of harmonious growth and the theory of super-imperialism preached by the reformists, the illusion of the automatic passage of the petty bourgeoisie to the anti-capitalist camp spread among the revolutionary faction. This was based on deductions from individual statements by factions of the petty-bourgeois milieu, but not on an analysis of the actual situation.

This belief in the automatic nature of the passage should be attributed to the fact that no detailed program was put forward for the petty bourgeoisie, limiting itself, as in Germany, mainly to appealing to its patriotic sentiments. Very often, in material matters, proletarian parties sought to “win over” the petty bourgeoisie with a knife between their teeth. At the same time, the effective weight of the petty bourgeoisie changed due to economic regression, which halted the historical process of the relative dissolution of the petty bourgeoisie in capitalist systems.

It should be noted that many people from the petty-bourgeois periphery accuse Marxism of being a supposedly narrow, wooden doctrine obscuring everything except a certain segment of reality. But Marxism is not to blame here. Marxism merely outlined a general direction of development, offering neither patterns nor prescriptions for all circumstances, and certainly did not prevent Marxists from realistically assessing the situation. If ossification occurred, it was because people imagined, not in a Marxist way, that they possessed such prescriptions, that they were attempting to extract such prescriptions from the great victories of the previous period. The successes of growth

in the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century are not the only issue here – a very negative role was also played by the non-dialectical assessment of the Russian Revolution.

In any case, in assessing fascism's successes, a significant role must be assigned to the internal impasse within the Marxist camp, which has so acutely manifested itself in the last decade. This impasse, both theoretical and practical, contributed to politicians' success in isolating the proletariat, siccing petty-bourgeois elements upon it, and temporarily annihilating its political power. Overcoming this impasse can only be achieved by clearly posing the issue of the petty bourgeoisie and the distinct interests of its individual factions, which are by no means in hopeless conflict with the interests of the workers. From this perspective, nothing is more ridiculous and harmful than, for example, downplaying the social successes of Hitlerism and treating its social demagogy lightly.

I have not addressed the economic aspect of the issue above, not wishing to expand the scope of this article, nonetheless a few words should be said about the impact of the global crisis on the rise and development of fascism, as this is where most misunderstandings occur. Particularly widespread are illusions about the direct, disruptive impact of the crisis on the fascist parties in power.

There is no doubt that the economic decline associated with the disintegration of capitalism constitutes the most important social fuel for fascism. The issue is not, of course, about the recent crisis (to which some attribute a decisive role in Hitler's rise to power), but the overall stagnation and decay associated with the halting development of the capitalist economy after the World War. In its growth period, capitalism destroyed and expropriated the petty bourgeoisie, proletarianizing it. But the overall progress of the national economy mitigated the effects of this devastation. Today, this is no longer the case. Capitalism does not proletarianize the petty bourgeoisie, but impoverishes it, depriving it of its prospects for existence. The productive apparatus no longer absorbs more people. Whereas in the past, a ruined artisan or a bankrupt peasant became a factory wage earner, suffering social degradation but not losing the base of existence, today they are condemned to the most genuine famine. They become paupers in the pre-capitalist sense, falling to the level of the lumpenproletariat, while retaining all the illusions associated with belonging to a category of socially “better” elements than the ordinary manual worker. This semi-lumpenproletariat has become a mass milieu for fascist recruitment; its lack of ideology means it easily transforms into an army for which obedience to the leader and bread-giver becomes the sole and supreme law.

Anyway, these matters are well known and do not require special proof. Much has been written about the agitational illusions in the economic demands and slogans of fascism, which allowed it to gather huge masses of supporters. If these slogans are based on illusions or cynical deception, this still does not explain their influence. After all, apart from the workers' parties and their criticism of Hitlerite propaganda, there were large competing bourgeois parties which also exposed these deceptions and absurdities. Why did this counter-propaganda not undermine the confidence of his supporters?

The answer cannot be sought solely in emotional motives, despair over a hopeless situation, or especially seductive agitation tricks. There were more concrete ideas here, and some of them had to be realized.

A distinction must be made here with the somewhat permanent programmatic demands of small producers, resulting from their economic situation in the capitalist system, which are directed both against big industry and against all forms of economic centralization, against bank usury, etc., and which demand support for small and medium-sized producers. These points find support in every petty-bourgeois movement and were by no means invented by cunning leaders. An important aspect of the ideology of both Mussolinism and Hitlerism is a kind of program of economic regression. This is expressed in the proclamation, at every opportunity, of anti-urbanist slogans, the return of the urban population to the countryside, etc., attempts to escape the effects of economic collapse. But recently, the program of reducing the productivity of society has become almost universal among bourgeois economists. For the petty bourgeoisie, this seems to open up long-dreamed-of prospects for the elimination of the large factory and the large machine (because they have already become accustomed to the small one). Of course, fascism does not intend to implement these utopian demands – on the contrary, it is handing over the reins of economic policy to big finance more energetically than any other government. There is no question of parceling out big industry, as promised recently. The anti-machine legislation of Hitlerism does not and will not play a role economically, because the areas it covers are of little importance – it is simply a bone thrown to appease.

The slogan of raising the middle estate is therefore being implemented in a different way: by increasing its share of social income to the detriment of the proletariat. This is being done in various

ways. The concept of the struggle for direct economic benefits associated with power, known as the "struggle for the trough," has been sufficiently discredited in Marxist literature as encouraging a vulgar simplification of political changes. Moreover, it was limited to the struggle for "fat morsels," sinecures, and positions that ensured high incomes. Postwar pauperization associated with the crisis of the capitalist economy caused the threshold of political corruption to shift significantly downward. The economic impasse provides a kind of surrogate for social struggle where there was none before. It is no longer just sinecures and "fat morsels" that are being distributed, but also positions that would not have been sought after in the pre-crisis era. This makes possible the creation of a million-strong army of government agents, which no previous capitalist regime has ever had at its disposal. In this way, the crisis, which undermines the foundations of capitalist society, also gives unprecedented breadth and resources to the wildest and most determined army of its defenders.

One could risk saying that the crisis lowered the costs of the civil war for the capitalists – German capital, which had treated the question of Hitlerite rule with reserve for so long, took this into account when implementing it.

Here, in the social arena, we have the application of the medieval principle that war feeds war. Of course, this old principle can only work for a short time. Whatever one may say about its devastating nature, however, it explains the more lasting successes of fascism.

The social balance of power is a reversal of the state of affairs that existed in Russia immediately before the October Revolution. There, the large landowners were isolated at the moment of decisive struggle by the proletariat, which collaborated with petty-bourgeois elements in the city and countryside. Here, conversely, the landowners, with the support of the petty bourgeoisie, isolate the proletariat and crush its political power. It is precisely this balance of power that made it possible to set in motion the complex mechanism of a preventive coup and reduce the matter to a "small" civil war. The conflicts of interest between the individual parts of the bloc are significant and irrefutable – they have been temporarily relegated to the background, but not eliminated. If they are already creating serious fissures in the closed system of the totalitarian state, then as economic and, above all, social influences are exhausted, the differences between the unequal "allies" will inevitably grow.

ON TOTALITARIANISM

Original title:
“Wokół totalizmu”

Originally published:
unclear, possibly written between
29 July and 25 November 1938.

Translation based on:
Andrzej Stawar “Pisma ostatnie”,
Instytut Literacki, Paris 1961, pp. 161-174.

In treatises on totalitarianism, Germany, Italy, and the USSR are commonly linked. This, however, introduces errors and simplifications. The differences in ideology and governing philosophy are undeniable. Common features include a single party with a cult of the leader, ideological unification, the enormous expansion of the state apparatus in all areas, and, finally, a set of characteristics defined as “dynamism,” which is sometimes associated with the special role of youth in these systems. The significance of the youth element was particularly highlighted by the Hitlerite experience. It is significant that even Marxist movements began to adopt the thesis of a certain commonality of interests among youth as such, despite class differences.

It's striking that, in Germany, for example, there's no mention of any particular economic privilege for young people. One of the first Hitlerite regulations after occupying Austria was a ban on hiring workers under 25 in factories. It can be considered a rule that for youth the Hitlerite state primarily provides barracks in various forms (military training, the army, labor camps). It's also difficult to believe that German youth are particularly drawn to the bleak allure of Winter Relief[XII], which encompassed nearly a quarter of the population. Yet, not only in Germany itself but also on its borders[XIII], youth is the main base for the expansion of the Hitlerite party. Directly economic motives don't play a decisive role in this mass drive; the explanation lies rather in the disintegration of elements of the old social order. Germany demonstrates that the total state draws driving forces for its unprecedented expansion from the products of this disintegration.

Crisis of the family

First and foremost, we must consider the destruction of the old family system. Such a claim may seem baseless at first glance. In Germany, the state supports the establishment of “family units” by all means and awards fertility bonuses. In Soviet Russia, the slogan of the “strong proletarian family” has prevailed for several years. Intensive support for childbearing is one thing, and the traditional family is quite another. Its importance to the state lay not so much in its fertility (which governments until recently paid little attention to) but in its character as the basic unit of society. This was linked to the upbringing and preparation of future citizens within a specific family hierarchy. The new state intensely supports the reproductive functions of the family, stripping it of its educational functions, destroying familial hierarchy and bond rooted in centuries.

XII Annual donation drive established in Germany in 1933, that replaced most tax-funded welfare institutions

XIII A reference to pro-German Nazi activities preceding the annexation of Austria and during the Sudeten crisis (both in 1938).

From the perspective of the traditional family, the new marriage law in Germany is something immoral. Reproductive elements are presented in a very explicit manner. Particularly drastic forms of excluding a child from under parental care can be found in child snitching, whether involuntary or deliberate, which is common in Germany.

The old state highly valued the bonds of family solidarity. When it came to matters such as a family hiding a criminal, the state considered that motives higher than its own interests were at stake. This differs significantly from the law in force in Soviet Russia, where failure to denounce a family member is treated as participation in a crime. A son who denounces his father is proclaimed a model citizen. The use of a kind of blackmail against the accused's family, e.g. to extract confessions, is commonplace. These methods were pointed out to Yagoda when the head of the GPU found himself in the dock[XIV]. It is doubtful whether his successors are any more delicate in this regard. The state, supporting the family as an essential element of population growth, crushes and devours the essence of the family relationship in the traditional sense.

But this creates lasting contact with the younger generation. The principle of the traditional family was a lack of control over parental care, idealized by old-fashioned moralists. Of course, there were and still are cases of family life that roughly correspond to ideal models. But in the overwhelming majority of cases, things were not so rosy. Especially in large families, upbringing was a bizarre combination of parental arbitrariness, dilettantism, ruthlessness and sentimentality. Take, for example, the numerous descriptions of childhood misery scattered throughout European fiction. Of course, where poverty, cramped living conditions, parental alcoholism, and sometimes even economic exploitation of children by adults are added to the mix, the conditions for human “breeding” become downright unbearable. No wonder that every extraction of a child from this idyllic hell, which even an averagely “happy” bourgeois family represents, may seem like liberation.

In a total state, from childhood, the “young generation” becomes the object of government policy.

XIV Genrikh Yagoda (1891-1938) was the chief of the Joint State Political Directorate (OGPU) from May 10 to July 10, 1934, head of the People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs from 1934 to 1936, and People’s Commissar of Communication from 1936 to 1937. He was one of defendants in the Third Moscow Trial (also known as the Trial of the Twenty-One, officially known as the Trial of the Anti-Soviet “Rightist-Trotskyist Bloc”) which took place 2-13 March 1938. He was found guilty and condemned to death.

The decline in the population's standard of living, by worsening family living conditions, even expedites this. Special state-funded childcare alleviates the effects of domestic poverty. And state education through various extracurricular activities and camps is so much more interesting than lazing around at home. What boy wouldn't consider outdoor military games a better way to spend his time than languishing under the dull and often angry care of his parents?

We have a very important factor here, complemented by state action in other areas. The break up of the old family unit is handing over the souls of a significant portion of the youth to the mono-party.

Struggle against cults

The struggle of Hitlerism against religion, or more precisely against Christian cults, is closely linked to this policy. The positive side, manifested in so-called “neo-paganism”, is often considered a random aberration and serves its opponents as an object of ridicule. However, when these issues are examined more closely, the more serious social and moral aspects of this struggle become apparent.

The issue is not the impossibility of reconciling Christian ideology with Hitlerist ideology – Christian systems have repeatedly demonstrated considerable flexibility and adaptability. During its rise to power, Hitlerism had the support of many leading figures in both Catholicism and Protestantism (such as the recently tried Pastor Niemöller[XV]).

Many opponents of Hitlerism, even among Marxists, are secretly somewhat surprised by the intensity of this struggle between the two reactionary powers, believing that the struggle against religion weakens Hitlerism. Nothing could be more superficial than this assumption. Anti-clerical campaigns in the past did not weaken French bourgeois radicalism, but rather strengthened it. The same is true of Hitlerism. Admittedly, the ideological background is different – French radicalism fought the church in the name of reason, while Hitlerism preaches the mysticism of blood. But we

XV Martin Niemöller (1892-1984) was a German Lutheran pastor and author of the famous 1946 poem “First they came…” During WWI Niemöller was an Imperial Navy Officer. In 1920 he took part in suppressing the Ruhr Uprising as a *Freikorps* commander. In 1924 he was ordained. As a pastor he publicly expressed reactionary, anti-democratic, anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi views. From 1924 to 1933 he voted for the NSDAP in parliamentary elections. In 1932 he had an audience with Hitler. In his 1933 autobiography he praised Hitler, which resulted in rave reviews in the Nazi press. After 1933 he opposed applying anti-Semitic restrictions to converts to Lutheranism (foremost, their exclusion from the clergy). He was arrested in 1937 and tried by the Special Court in 1938. After being sentenced to pay a fine, he was immediately arrested by Gestapo and interned in Sachsenhausen and Dachau concentration camps until the end of the war. After 1945 he became human rights and peace activist.

should not forget that in practice, Nazi ideology operates with vulgar biological materialism, while the Hitler administration attempts to rationalize and regulate by decree areas of life that even the rationalist bourgeois state of yesteryear left to the "natural course of things". This peculiar cultural rationalism, albeit shrouded in the mystique of blood and race, is one of the main causes of the conflict. This is again linked to the family question.

Long ago, religion acted as the legislator and guardian of the norms of sexual life, in close connection with the unwritten moral code that regulated it.

There is no doubt that these traditional norms of sexual life, a bizarre yet organic blend of monastic asceticism that cursed natural drives and of patriarchalism corrected by capitalist conditions, were in no way consistent with the demands of life. Applied as an educational system, and adorned with the menacing superstructure of religious injunction, they twisted countless lives, becoming the cause of numerous individual and social disasters. There is a vast critical and accusatory literature in this area – initiated largely by socialists. Any rationalization here must, again, be viewed by young people as a liberating factor.

Recently, a socialist daily published a couple of matrimonial ads from a Hitlerite magazine as an example of comic horrendousness. In these ads, women, among other physical and spiritual virtues, also offered potential suitors "sexual prowess". This, after all, demonstrates the rationalization of sexual life (why should sexual prowess be less important in marriage than other virtues commonly emphasized by those interested in matrimonial ads?).

Here again we have significant, quite serious factors of the notorious neo-paganism (or the new Hellas, which, in a slightly different sense, Glaeser's young Hitlerites dream of[XVI]). In a report on a German art exhibition, the *I.K.C.*[XVII] correspondent emphasizes the striking increase in the number of nudes. It turns out that this is the result of a special circular drawing artists' attention to the beauty of the human body. Again, in light of previous notions, a state institution concerned with providing a sufficient number of female nudes for a painting exhibition seems comical. The serious

XVI Reference to Ernst Glaeser's (1902-1963) novel "Der letzte Zivilist" (1935). Glaeser was a left-wing German writer who emigrated in 1934. In exile he moved right and returned to Germany in 1939. After his return he smeared exiles as traitors and endorsed the regime. During WWII he edited Luftwaffe's official newspaper.

XVII *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny* (*The Illustrated Daily Courier*) was a Polish high-circulation daily newspaper, published from 1910 to 1939. During the interwar period it was the newspaper with highest circulation in Poland.

element is the management of the society's moral evolution. It is worth adding here the fact that the émigré press occasionally reports about sexual life in youth camps in Germany.

It is in the light of these transformations in the treatment of family, of social and moral transformations, that the struggle between Nazi ideology and Christianity should be viewed. Regardless of how we assess them, they undoubtedly constitute a factor in the strength of Hitlerism today. Speaking of the crushing of individuality in Germany, of spiritual captivity, is true when it comes to higher forms of intellectual life. But this same system ensures for its adherents a certain freedom of individuality, even if we were to describe its forms as barbaric in the light of previously prevailing concepts. There is no doubt that significant segments of youth, beginning from earliest childhood, perceive state control as liberation from the tyranny of many outworn norms and possess a certain soldierly freedom.

Moreover, the fascist policy of molding a new generation, drawing them out of the home, and treating children as political objects is emulated directly from templates of Soviet Russia. Youth are paid to the state as a resource that is low-maintenance – provided they're given the opportunity to blow off steam – and insensitive to, for example, a deterioration in the quality of bread or housing conditions.

When it comes to the struggle with religion, Hitlerism is driven by the need to more firmly grasp the social material on which it operates. From the perspective of the churches, it is more dangerous than Marxism because Marxist parties operated among elements naturally susceptible to anti-Church agitation, which were considered, in a sense, lost. Nazism has significant influence, primarily among the traditionally inclined, conservative masses of the petty bourgeoisie and peasantry, the classic base of fideism. The gaps created here will no longer be bridged, even in the event of a more lasting compromise between the churches and Hitlerism.

But when Comintern leaders (e.g., Thorez's[XVIII] famous speech) offer Catholics cooperation against fascism, we have here, above all, evidence of political confusion. The struggle with the Church, at least in the present period – we repeat – strengthens fascism rather than weakens it.

XVIII Maurice Thorez (1900-1964) was a French communist and leader of French Communist Party (PCF) from 1934 until his death. From 1946 to 1947 he served as Deputy Prime Minister in France’s Provisional Government. Under his leadership the PCF implemented the Stalinist tactic of “popular fronts” with bourgeois-democratic parties.

Antagonisms in the functioning of the system

At first glance, what strikes one about a total state is its armor, which protects it from minor difficulties in functioning. Apologists emphasize that high efficiency results from the absence of internal antagonisms. The mono-party is considered the most important stabilizing factor. However, it is not a party, a faction in the strict sense of the word; it was a party at most at the beginning of its activity. Gradually, it is becoming, as they say in Germany, the leader's squad, taking on a praetorian character. Its members enjoy unquestionable privileges. For his devotion, unconditional obedience, and love for the leader, a member of the squad receives clear benefits. The so-called non-partisan inevitably becomes a second-class citizen.

This already creates a difficult dilemma. The system is interested in ensuring that contact between the non-partisan masses and this praetorian squad does not take on a clearly hostile character. Leaving aside the issue of possible opposition, the masses of citizens must harbor a natural aversion due to the privileged status of the squad (superficially masked by an entire system of hierarchy). Equalizing both categories of citizens would be tantamount to dissolving the praetorian element in the masses, and thus the end of the system. The squad consists of militant elements, seasoned in domestic struggles, and the value of a squad member is greater the more belligerence and predatory instincts he exhibits. The party trains him systematically, deliberately creating a psychosis of violence, which is somewhat reminiscent of the training that a landowner concerned for his property subjects his yard dogs to.

But sometimes this requires violent and brutal measures to curb the excessive appetites of the squad. A classic example of the suppression of a squad is the famous June massacre of 1934[XIX] in Germany. Citizen, tyrannized and endlessly threatened, witnesses the most powerful and unruly party magnates fall under the blows of the leader's henchmen, while the squad members writhe in spasms of fear and uncertainty.

Abroad, especially after June 30th, was struck by the behavior of the mass of militants, who failed to react seriously to the extermination of the leaders who expressed their aspirations. But this is

XIX The Night of the Long Knives (30 June-2 July 1934) was a purge of the Nazi party (mainly its paramilitary wing, the SA) of elements opposed to Hitler’s government compromise with the military and social establishment. Nazi leadership also utilized the occasion to eliminate its far-right opponents from outside the party. Officially 85 people were killed; actual number of casualties was probably in the hundreds.

simply explained. The squad itself is fundamentally isolated, with virtually no social support. The lower classes hate it as a guard of capitalists, while the bourgeoisie, valuing them as saviors, views this horde, raised on anti-property ideals, with suspicion. The only option left is to endure the punishing blows while exclaiming praise for the leader. The growth of his authority ultimately strengthens the system.

These, to use Tuwim's[XX] phrase, anti-mutual relations between the mass of non-partisan citizens, the squad, and the leader, lend a certain flexibility to the system. In essence, its functioning is antagonistic, no less so than functioning of the parliamentary system. Only here, the antagonisms are not of such an overt, commonplace nature; concealed, they manifest themselves all the more dramatically in moments of crisis.

The more a leader curbs the ambitions and predatory militancy of his squad, the stronger his personal position becomes. Observers of German relations generally conclude that the nonpartisan bourgeois views Hitler with sympathy and trust, while, on the contrary, he is much less favorable towards the leader's entourage. This means that their attitude toward the leader is following the path paved by dynastic monarchies. This same type of citizen once adored Wilhelm II, blaming everything he disliked in the state on his bad advisors – at least for a while. Regardless of any inconvenient aspects for the squad itself, they must support this state of affairs – the monarchical authority of the leader is their main link to nonpartisan society.

Propaganda is moving in this direction – the administration takes on the odium of unpopular actions – the leader, relieved of the dirty, everyday work, makes historic declarations, imbued with the spirit of the common good. Monarchical traditions in the masses provide ready-made formulas, with little modification, suitable for new relationships. As we can see, the most diverse layers and the most divers interests participate in proclaiming the leader's authority. This makes the system less durable.

The monarchist methods of manufacturing the leader's authority are particularly brutal in Soviet Russia. Here, the masses are regularly incited against entire sections of the party and state apparatus under the leader's auspices. At the same time, such campaigns are usually combined with concessions to non-partisan groups. It is drilled into citizen's head that everything good is the leader's personal initiative, while all mistakes and harm are the responsibility of the unfortunate

XX Julian Tuwim (1894-1953) was a famous Polish poet. He’s most remembered as co-founder of the Skamander literary group and for his children’s literature.

executors. This demagogy undoubtedly panders to the instincts of politically backward segments of the population.

Analogies and differences

There is no doubt that fascist parties in many respects copied the organizational patterns of Bolshevism, its techniques of organizing the masses and propaganda. They did this better than the Comintern parties. Gradually, as the global reaction progressed, as the workers' movement declined, including in Russia, the Soviet regime, undergoing adaptation processes, appropriated much from the mono-party fascist regimes. Nevertheless, far-reaching analogies, such as in Włodzimierz Dzwonkowski's[XXI] article “Stalin's Road to Fascism” (in issue 726 of *Wiadomości Literackie*[XXII]), should be considered unfounded.

Significant differences, drawing strength from their distinct social backgrounds, are evident in the philosophies of these regimes. Fascism, both Italian and German, is characterized by traditionalism, one might even say a certain legitimism, and the related limitation of its goals, which draw their justification from society's historical past. Italian fascism's goal is essentially the reconstruction of the Mediterranean Roman Empire, while Nazism sees its goal as the conquest of all territories where Germanic Nordic man had ever settled. Hitler drew attention to this imperial traditionalism in his Nuremberg speech last year. Related to this is the negation of the so-called Ideals of the 19th century, extending, in fact, into previous centuries, all the way to the Renaissance, from which Europe’s democratic and humanist aspirations ultimately derive.

Stalinism is a different story. Despite everything, it considers itself linked to these libertarian and progressive trends. Even its supporters, who flatly defend all its atrocities, do so rather shamefully – they don't attempt to make it an ideal. Of course, not without fascist influence, Stalinism strikes a strong messianic and nationalistic tone. But again, its theoretical principle is not the construction of an empire, but rather universal happiness in a classless society – an ideology akin to progressive trends in European thought.

XXI Włodzimierz Dzwonkowski (1880-1954) was a Polish historian and anti-Soviet political activist. In the interwar period he co-operated with the Eastern Institute (*Instytut Wschodni*), a “sovietological” think-thank in Warsaw.
XXII *Wiadomości Literackie* (*Literary News*) was a Polish cultural magazine published from 1924 to 1939.

The Soviet system evolved largely in the context of the temporary victory of fascist tendencies, introducing a monarchical approach to the “leader” principle and the Gleichschaltung of society. Nevertheless, differences in the social background mean that these issues present themselves differently here. Bonaparte zealously imitated the old monarchies by suppressing freedom of thought and civil liberties, and stifling the press, just as they did. However, his system cannot be identified with the legitimist governments of the time due to the different social foundation on which it was based. This means that despite Stalinism's zealous imitation of what appear to be the strengths of fascism, it is not possible to speak of identification or a common social ideology.

In any case, the monarchical evolution of the principle of leadership is expressed with extreme vividness in the treatment of the party, transforming it into a praetorian squad according to “Western” models. According to official reports from the battle of Changkufeng[XXIII], Soviet soldiers went into battle under deadly Japanese fire shouting: “For the great Stalin, for the motherland, for communism.” We will not delve into the accuracy of this battle report and whether Soviet soldiers really died with such cries on their lips at Changkufeng, but the report itself undoubtedly illustrates the ideology of the praetorian stratum.

Sycophancy

There is no need to emphasize the fundamental role of mass political terror in a total state. However, it is worth discussing those factors which, even in this seemingly indisputable area of security, take on an antagonistic character. These systems developed repressive apparatus, public police forces, and especially secret police forces to fantastic extremes. Soviet Commissar of Internal Affairs Yezhov[XXIV] proudly stated in public that, in addition to official functionaries, his department had many millions of informers and promised to recruit millions more. This is confirmed in a way by data from the émigré press, which claims that perhaps every third working person is a “seksot” (short for “sekretnyi sotrudnik”[XXV]). The expansion of a similar apparatus in Germany is relatively not much smaller.

XXIII The Battle of Changkufeng (also known as the Battle of Lake Khasan) took place from 29 July to 11 August 1938 between the Red Army and combined forces of Imperial Japan and its puppet state, Manchukuo. It ended in Soviet victory.

XXIV Nikolai Yezhov (1895-1940) was the People’s Commissar of Internal Affairs from 1936 to 1938. His tenure corresponded with the height of the Great Purge. In 1938 he was progressively sidelined. From 1938 to 1939 he was the People’s Commissar of Water Transport. In 1939 he was arrested and accused, among other things, of “excesses” during the Purge. In 1940 he was tried and executed.

XXV Secret collaborator.

The fantastic growth of professional and occasional snitching is beyond doubt.

One might ask how, with such a colossal expansion of the police apparatus, with millions of informants, it is possible for political crimes to proliferate on such a massive scale, as indicated by the mass trials of the kind recently seen in Moscow.

One of the most prominent among the accused was, as we know, the long-time head of this million-strong apparatus. Yagoda was accused of a multitude of crimes, the most important, though the one least talked about, was “fouchism” (after Fouché[XXVI], famous police minister under the Directory and Napoleon), an exaggerated conception of the scope of his power. If the data on the apparatus' expansion are true (and we have no reason to doubt it), it means that the heads of this dicastery command a staff larger than all the other ministries and offices combined. Therefore, would it not occur to the heads of this overpowering institution, with its tentacles everywhere and controlling everyone and everything, that the entire administration, all state authorities, including the providential leader, were simply a modest appendage of their ministry? Such thoughts must have haunted the illustrious Fouché, whose omnipotence was, after all, less powerful than that of his spiritual descendants today.

Such a vast ministry, constituting a state within a state, must sooner or later find itself forced to pursue its own policies, using its own methods, and come into conflict with other authorities. Of course, this is only possible if the internal storms sparked by these squabbles do not transcend the sphere of the ruling bureaucracy. Eventually, however, the time comes for their reveal, and then the colossal security machinery, at a moment when it could be most useful to the system, becomes the cause of its paralysis. Historical experience once again confirms that excessive expansion of the police apparatus ultimately brings consequences similar to its complete absence.

XXVI Joseph Fouché (1759-1820) was a French revolutionary and statesman. From 1792 to 1795 he served as Deputy to the National Convention. He was the Minister of Police from 1799 to 1802, from 1804 to 1810, and twice in 1815 – during Napoleon’s 100 Days and after Bourbon Restoration. Between the final fall of Napoleon and the Restoration he lead France’s Provisional Government. In 1816 he was condemned to exile. Fouché was infamous for his opportunism and cynicism combined with ruthlessness. He served under various governments and repressed their enemies, including his previous masters (one of his first noteworthy political acts was voting for death sentence for Louis XVI, his last was serving as minister for late king’s brother – Louis XVIII). He often utilized his vast political apparatus for his own political gain, including conspiring against his superiors and engaging in back channel diplomacy.

Militarism and democracy

A key feature of total rule is its hypermilitarism – subjecting social and economic life to military demands to a degree never seen before. Yet all “dictatorships” have, to a greater or lesser extent, problems with their own military apparatus. Hitler's problems are well-known, and Mussolini's were quite significant during the Abyssinian campaign, not to mention Soviet Russia. How can this be explained? A massively inflated military budget allows not only for large investments but also for satisfying the material interests of the officer corps. This would leave room for differences in views on current policy. But this explanation is insufficient. Here appear motives inherently linked to the overall techniques of government.

Conflicts are primarily caused by the paramilitary system itself, the fact that the role of praetorians in the Caesarist system is played by the party militia, which keeps citizens in fear and obedience. If the military dictatorships of old were described as rule by the sword, today's total dictatorships could be described as rule by the stick, given the primary weapon of these militias.

Parliamentary democracy, by breaking the old absolute power, achieved with great difficulty the principle of military non-intervention in domestic affairs. (The history of 19th-century France serves as an example.) Total regimes continue to rely on this principle, which becomes fictitious in changed circumstances, and moreover, by resorting to force in a naked and daily manner, they violate this fiction. But if there is to be rule by force, army leaders must sooner or later ask why, in place of rule by a cudgel in the hand of a voluble demagogue, whose contact with the masses becomes essentially fictitious, they should not introduce rule by the saber, considered more reliable by, for example, conservative sections of society.

But the military question has another aspect, undoubtedly more important in the elimination of totalitarianism. It should not be forgotten that parliamentary democracy is, after all, linked to universal military service. Arguments about the rights of the people may seem declamatory when justified abstractly. In fact, the aforementioned principle predates contemporary democracies. As long as the mass of citizens is the basis of the army, the permanent dispossession of their rights is impossible, and conversely, a professional army entails stripping citizens of the essence of those rights, even if appearances are maintained. We see this in the examples of ancient republics – the Roman Republic fell when the citizen militia was replaced by a professional army. The native

"golden liberty of the nobility"[XXVII] arose from the levy [*pospolite ruszenie*]. The origins of the French republic and modern English parliamentarism are undoubtedly military.

While it's true that in the two large Anglo-Saxon countries there is no universal military service, the role of the professional army in domestic politics has long been balanced by the historic anti-militarism of the Anglo-Saxon bourgeoisie. Moreover, when decisive matters arise, the governments of these countries resort to universal conscription.

I have already mentioned that a total state, by its very nature, violates the convention of apolitical military. In peacetime, friction with the higher military apparatus comes to the fore. This conflict takes on a different form in wartime, when the mass of those capable of bearing arms joins the army. The praetorian squad then loses its significance. The very division into two categories of citizens – privileged, belonging to the ruling party, and the non-partisan mass – takes on a different content. Ultimately, the privileges of the leader's squad stem from the fact that it possesses weapons and can impose its will on other citizens. And a crucial feature of a total state is the unprecedented development of the principle of command and control in areas where the state administration has never previously interfered. Citizens are forbidden from having opinions on class struggle and are persecuted for belonging to a church, their clothing is regulated and they are forced to buy a people's car[XXVIII] when they would rather be sufficiently fed, a belief is drilled into their heads that potatoes are tastier than bread and turnips are more nutritious than meat. In addition – which is by no means an insignificant thing – he is forbidden to even talk about it, and when he wants to complain about all this, he simply gets cudgeled like any Zulu or Hottentot in the colonies.

Our nobleman, at the end of the Middle Ages, allowed his lords to hassle him during peacetime. When war came, assembled in a mass levy, he would take royal manifestos to his sword and begin to establish the principles of government competence and constitutional law before heading into the field. The citizen of a total state, massed and armed, will become part of that almost mystical

XXVII "Golden Liberty" describes a system of political privileges and institutions in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from late 16th to late 18th century. It was based on civil privileges for the nobility, strong legislature (in which decisions had to be unanimous and legislators were bound by electorate's instructions) and weak monarchical power vested in an elected king (monarchs were elected by the general assembly open to all members of the nobility). By privileging the nobility at the expense of the urban bourgeoisie and peasantry, the system strengthened feudalism and resulted in economic regression. Meanwhile, the principle of parlamentary unanimity resulted in inability to pass necessary reforms and progressing political disintegration. Ultimately the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was unable to save itself from internal anarchy and foreign threats, and lost its independence in 1795. During the Enlightenment, "Polish liberty" became a byword for political anarchy and freedom unconcerned with civic duties.

XXVIII Literal translation of the name "Volkswagen".

combined force that has terrorized him until now. The politicization of the army will permeate from the upper echelons of the apparatus to the lower ones. Will the citizen, leaning on his rifle, not begin to engage in politics and rally, making up time for when he was deprived of it? Will we not see a repeat of the images seen in 1917 and 1918, when all the artificially suppressed social contradictions came to the fore, and will the standardized citizen not want to guarantee his regained rights in a more lasting manner?

The shaft of Achilles' spear had the ability to heal the wounds inflicted by its blade. Today's rampant militarism can be seen as a factor that will enable democracy, naturally in new forms of social democracy[XXIX], to overcome totalitarian absolutism.

XXIX Stawar's Polish term for 'social democracy' used here [*demokracja społeczna*] is different the one used for the reformist political movement of the same English name [*socjaldemokracja*].